СКАЗКИ

THE TALE OF
TSAREVICH IVAN, THE FIRE-BIRD
AND GREY WOLF

Сказка
об
Иване-царевиче, Жар-птице
и о сером волке

Рисунки
И. А. Билибина.

Retold in English by Irina Zheleznova

© Гознак, 1977

Сказка об Ива́не-царе́виче, Жа́р-птице и о се́ром во́лке.

THE TALE OF TSAREVICH IVAN, THE FIRE-BIRD AND GREY WOLF

In a certain tsardom, in a certain realm there lived a Tsar named Demyan who had three sons: Tsarevich Pyotr, Tsarevich Vassily and Tsarevich Ivan.

Now, the Tsar had a garden so beautiful that its match could not be found anywhere. All sorts of trees grew there and among them an apple-tree that bore golden apples. The Tsar treasured these apples and kept strict count of them.

One day he found that someone was visiting his garden at night and stealing his golden apples. Every morning one apple was missing from the tree, but, try hard as they would, the Tsar's watchmen could not catch the thief.

So grieved was the Tsar that he lost his sleep and would not touch food or drink. He called his sons to his side and said to them:

"Do as I ask, my sons, and keep watch over my garden. He who catches the thief will get half my tsardom!"

The sons promised to do their best, and Tsarevich Pyotr was the first to go into the garden and keep watch there. He walked about for a long time but saw no one. At last, feeling tired, he sat down on the grass beneath the apple-tree that bore the golden apples and dozed away. While he slept another of the apples was stolen.

In the morning the Tsar said to him:

"Well, my son, did you at least catch sight of the thief?"

И.БИЛИБИНЪ. 1899.

"No, my Tsar, no, Father. I did not close my eyes all night but I saw no one."

On the following night Tsarevich Vassily went out to keep watch. He sat down under the apple-tree and gazed at the bushes round him, hoping to catch sight of the thief. But his eyes soon closed and he dozed away, only to find on waking that a golden apple was missing.

Said the Tsar to him:

"Well, my son, did you at least catch sight of the thief?"

"No, my Tsar, no, Father. I never closed my eyes but I saw and heard nothing."

On the third night Tsarevich Ivan went out to keep watch. He walked about near the tree, afraid to sit down lest he fall asleep. An hour passed, and another hour, and a third, but whenever Tsarevich Ivan felt himself getting sleepy, he would wash his eyes with dew.

Half the night went by and he saw something glowing in the distance. The light drew closer and closer, and all of a sudden the garden was lit up as if by sunshine. Tsarevich Ivan looked, and he saw the Fire-Bird come flying up. It perched in the apple-tree and pecked at a golden apple.

Tsarevich Ivan crept up quietly and caught the bird by the tail. But the Fire-Bird, though he held it fast, broke free of his grasp and flew away, leaving a feather from its tail in his hand.

In the morning the Tsar was no sooner up than Tsarevich Ivan went to him, and, showing him the Fire-Bird's feather, told him who the thief had been. The Tsar was very pleased and took the feather for a keepsake.

From that time on the Fire-Bird visited the garden no more, and the Tsar got back his appetite and his sleep. But he would often look at the feather and admire it and think about the Fire-Bird.

One day he called his sons to his side and said:

"Listen to me, my sons! Saddle your steeds and set off to seek the Fire-Bird. Bring it to me before it comes flying here anew and stealing my apples."

The two elder sons prepared to set out on their way. They saddled their steeds, donned their knightly armour and rode off in search of the Fire-Bird. Tsarevich Ivan was left behind, for the Tsar thought him too young to join his brothers, but he pleaded with his father again and again to let him go, and when the Tsar at last agreed, he, too, got on his steed and rode away.

Whether a long time passed by or a little time none can say, for a tale is short in the telling but a deed is long in the doing, but one day he reached a spot where the road branched off in three different directions and where stood a large stone inscribed with the following words:

"Go straight ahead, and you will suffer hunger and cold; go to the right. and you will lose your horse; go to the left, and you will die."

Tsarevich Ivan read the inscription, and, after thinking it over, made up his mind to go to the right. He rode for a day, and another, and on the evening of the

third day reached a dense forest. All of a sudden Grey Wolf rushed out of the bushes and pounced on Tsarevich Ivan's horse. Before Tsarevich Ivan could pull out his sword Grey Wolf had torn the horse in two and vanished.

Tsarevich Ivan had no choice, so he went on on foot. A day passed, and another, and a third, and he began to feel so weary that he was ready to drop. He sat down on a tree-stump when lo! — as if out of nowhere Grey Wolf appeared.

"Why so sad, Tsarevich Ivan?" asked he. "Why do you sit there with hanging head?"

"How can I help it, Grey Wolf! Where can I go without my horse?"

"You chose the road yourself, you know. But I am sorry for you, so tell me whither you are bound."

"My father the Tsar has sent me to fetch him the Fire-Bird that has been stealing his golden apples."

"He has, has he! Why, you could not have reached the Fire-Bird on that horse of yours in a hundred years. I alone know where it is. Get on my back and hold tight. I killed your horse, so now I shall serve you truly and faithfully."

Tsarevich Ivan got on his back, and off went Grey Wolf in a flash. Blue streams skimmed past ever so fast, green forests swept by in the wink of an eye, and at last they came to a high stone wall.

Said Grey Wolf:

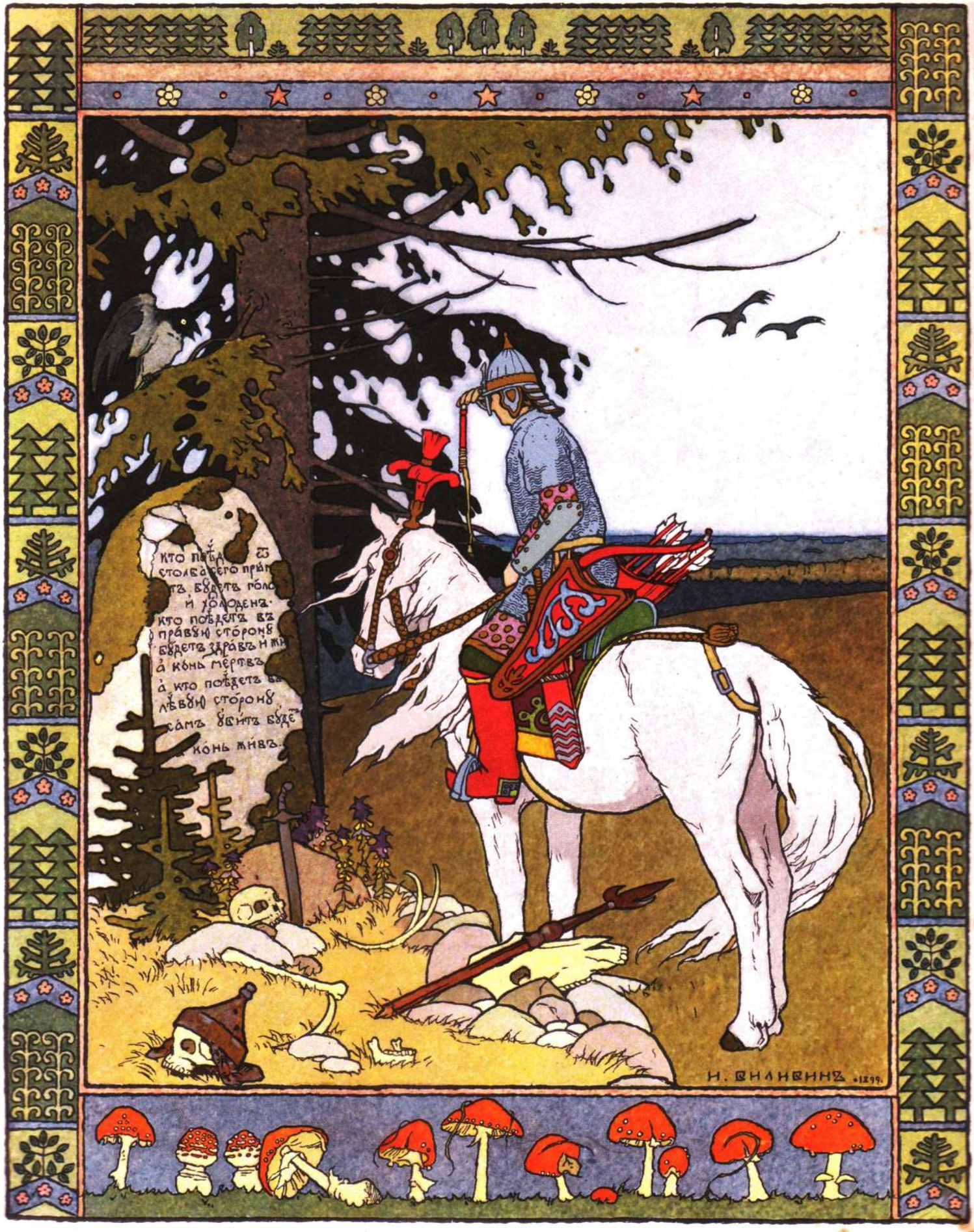
"Come, Tsarevich Ivan, climb over the wall. There is a garden behind it and in that garden a golden cage with the Fire-Bird in it. The guards are asleep, so take the bird, but mind that you do not touch the cage."

Tsarevich Ivan climbed over the wall and down into the garden and saw the Fire-Bird in its cage. He took out the bird and started for the wall when it came to him that the cage was all studded with gems and very costly and that he had need of it in any case, if only so as not to have to carry the bird in his bosom. He turned back, and, forgetting what Grey Wolf had told him, picked up the cage. All of a sudden the air was rent by a great ringing of bells and a rattling of rattles, and the guards woke and came running into the garden. They seized Tsarevich Ivan, bound his hands and marched him off to Tsar Afron.

"Who are you and whence do you hail?" Tsar Afron shouted in great fury.

"I am Tsarevich Ivan, son of Tsar Demyan. Your Fire-Bird has been visiting my father's garden and stealing his golden apples. That was why he sent me after it."

"Well, you should have come to me and asked for it openly and perhaps you'd have got it. But now I will send out messengers to all the lands and realms that you may be known throughout for the thief that you are. Or no — perhaps I will not, that is, if you do me a service. Beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands, in the Thrice-Ten Tsardom there is a Tsar named Kusman who has a Horse with a Golden Mane. Bring me that horse, and I will forgive you and let you have the Fire-Bird besides."


Кто пойдетъ из
столбá сего пря
тъ будетъ голо
и холоденъ.
Кто пойдетъ въ
прáвую сторонý
будетъ здрáвъ и жи
á конь мертвъ
á кто пойдетъ въ
лéвую сторонý
сáмъ убитъ будетъ
конь живъ.
И. Билибинъ 1899.

Tsarevich Ivan went back to Grey Wolf, very sad and crestfallen.

"Why did you not listen to me, Tsarevich Ivan?" said Grey Wolf. "I told you you would get in trouble if you touched the cage."

"I am sorry, Grey Wolf, do please forgive me."

"Oh, all right, then. Get on my back and hold tight, and I will take you where you want to go."

Tsarevich Ivan got on his back, and off went Grey Wolf in a flash. Blue streams skimmed past ever so fast, green forests swept by in the wink of an eye, and after a time they came to the tsardom of Tsar Kusman.

Grey Wolf stopped before the Tsar's stables of white stone and said:

"Climb over the wall, Tsarevich Ivan, take the Horse with the Golden Mane and run for your life! But mind that you do not touch the golden bridle that you see hanging there."

Tsarevich Ivan climbed over the wall and crept into the Tsar's stables of white stone. All the watchmen were asleep, so he took the Horse with the Golden Mane and was about to lead it out when he caught sight of the golden bridle hanging on the wall.

"I might as well take the bridle, too," thought he.

But no sooner had he touched it than there began a great ringing and clang-

ing throughout the stables, and the watchmen woke and came running. They seized Tsarevich Ivan and marched him off to Tsar Kusman.

"Who are you and whence do you hail?" Tsar Kusman shouted. "How dared you come here and try to steal my horse?"

"I am Tsarevich Ivan, son of Tsar Demyan."

"The son of a tsar to stoop so low! Why did you not come to me and ask for the horse? I'd have given it to you out of respect for your father. But now I will send out messengers to all the realms that you may be known throughout for the thief that you are. Or no — perhaps I will not if you do me a service. Beyond the Thrice-Nine Realms, in the Thrice-Ten Tsardom there is a Tsar named Dalmat whose daughter Yelena the Beautiful I would have for myself. Bring her to me, and I will forgive you and let you have the Horse with the Golden Mane besides."

Tsarevich Ivan went back to Grey Wolf and told him all about everything.

"Why did you not listen to me, Tsarevich Ivan?" said Grey Wolf. "Why did you touch the golden bridle? All you do is make trouble for yourself and for me, too."

"I am sorry, Grey Wolf, do please forgive me."

"Oh, all right, then. Get on my back and hold tight and we will go to seek Yelena the Beautiful."

Tsarevich Ivan got on Grey Wolf's back, and off went Grey Wolf in a flash. Blue streams skimmed past ever so fast, green forests swept by in the wink of an eye, and at last they came to Tsar Dalmat's realm and stopped before a garden with a golden fence around it.

"I shall do everything myself this time," said Grey Wolf. "Get off my back now, go back the way we came and wait for me by the oak-tree out in the open field."

Tsarevich Ivan did as he was told, and as soon as it was dark Grey Wolf leapt over the fence and hid behind a bush. He waited all day but it was not till evening that Yelena the Beautiful, escorted by her maids, women and ladies-in-waiting, came out into the garden for a breath of fresh air. As she stooped to pluck a flower, Grey Wolf rushed out, seized her, threw her across his back, and, leaping over the fence, took to his heels.

He ran to the oak-tree where Tsarevich Ivan was waiting for him and said:

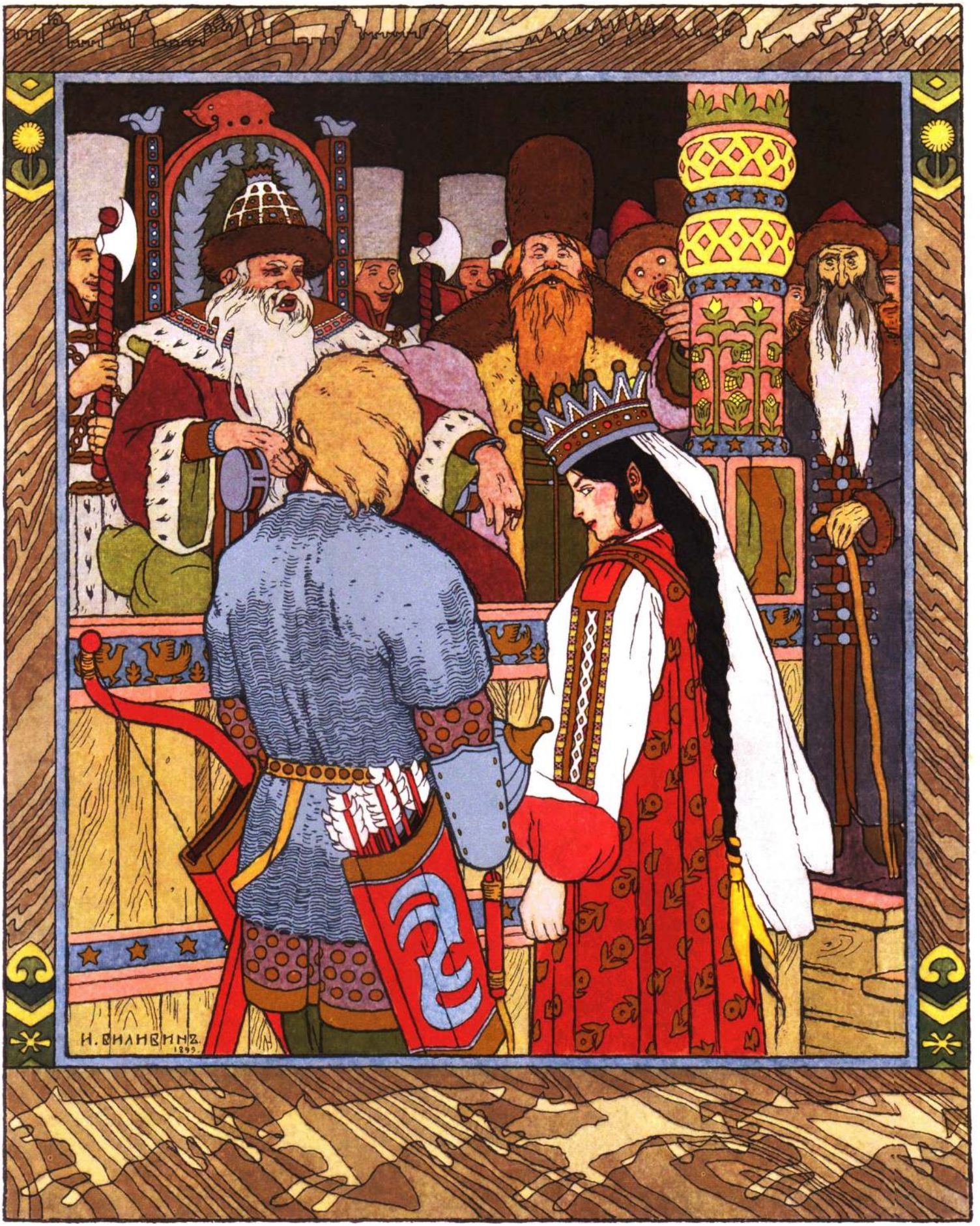
"You get on my back, too, and let's be off before they stop us!"

Tsarevich Ivan got on Grey Wolf's back, and away they went! And the huntsmen Tsar Dalmat sent after them could not overtake them and came back empty-handed.

By and by Yelena the Beautiful opened her eyes, which in her fear she had kept shut, and saw that she was resting in the arms of a young and handsome knight who rode behind her on Grey Wolf's back. Neither could tear his gaze from the other, and it was soon clear to both that they had fallen in love.

They arrived in Tsar Kusman's tsardom, and Tsarevich Ivan grew very sad and woebegone.

"What makes you so sad, Tsarevich Ivan?" Grey Wolf asked.


И. БИЛИБИНЪ.
1899.

"How can I help it, Grey Wolf! I have fallen in love with Yelena the Beautiful and cannot bring myself to part with such loveliness."

Said Grey Wolf:

"I have helped you in many ways, Tsarevich Ivan, and I shall help you again. I will take the shape of Yelena the Beautiful and you shall lead me to Tsar Kusman in her stead. Yelena the Beautiful can wait for you under that oak-tree. As soon as you come back to her with Golden Mane you two had better get on his back and ride away. I will catch up with you later."

They left Yelena the Beautiful under the tree, and Grey Wolf rolled over on the ground and took her shape. Tsarevich Ivan then led him to Tsar Kusman, and the Tsar was overjoyed and gave him the Horse with the Golden Mane and the golden bridle besides.

Tsarevich Ivan got on the horse and went back for Yelena the Beautiful. He put her on the horse's back, and away they rode for Tsar Afron's tsardom!

Tsar Kusman held a wedding and a feast to celebrate it, and the oaken tables in the palace groaned under the weight of jugs of mead and wine and platters of sweets.

The guests raised their cups and congratulated the bride and groom, and. according to an age-old custom, cried "bitter!" so the two would kiss and thus make the bitter wine sweet.

Tsar Kusman bent down to kiss his young bride but instead of the lovely lips of Yelena the Beautiful his lips met a wolf's bristly muzzle. The Tsar sprang back

in fear, and Grey Wolf jumped out of the window, and, taking to his heels, soon caught up with Tsarevich Ivan and Yelena the Beautiful.

"Get on my back, Tsarevich Ivan," said he, "and let Yelena the Beautiful ride on the Horse with the Golden Mane."

Tsarevich Ivan got on Grey Wolf's back and away they rode!

They were nearing Tsar Afron's tsardom when Tsarevich Ivan again grew sad and woebegone.

"What makes you so sad, Tsarevich Ivan?" Grey Wolf asked.

"How can I help it! I have little wish to exchange the Horse with the Golden Mane for the Fire-Bird. But if I don't, Tsar Afron will spread ill fame of me far and wide."

"Take heart, Tsarevich Ivan. I have sworn to serve you faithfully and I won't go back on my word. I shall take the shape of the Horse with the Golden Mane, and you lead me to the Tsar."

They hid Yelena the Beautiful and the Horse with the Golden Mane in the forest, and Grey Wolf rolled over on the ground and took the horse's shape.

Tsarevich Ivan got on his back and rode to Tsar Afron's palace. The Tsar welcomed him warmly and invited him to partake of food and drink, but Tsarevich Ivan declined, and the Tsar gave him the Fire-Bird and the golden cage, too, and let him go.

Tsarevich Ivan went back to the forest, he and Yelena the Beautiful got on Golden Mane's back, and, taking the Fire-Bird, set off homewards.

On the next day Tsar Afron decided to break in his new horse. Accompanied by his huntsmen, he rode to the forest when lo!—a fox crossed their path. They gave chase after it but it ran so swiftly that after a time all fell back and only Tsar Afron on his new horse could keep up with it.

All of a sudden Tsar Afron's horse stumbled and fell and Grey Wolf appeared in its place, and, throwing Tsar Afron to the ground, took to his heels. The huntsmen came running and helped up the Tsar but before they could start in pursuit of Grey Wolf he had vanished.

Grey Wolf soon caught up with Tsarevich Ivan, and Tsarevich Ivan got off Golden Mane's back and climbed on his. They rode on, but by and by Grey Wolf stopped and said:

"This is the spot where I killed your horse, Tsarevich Ivan, and it is here we must part."

Tsarevich Ivan bowed low to Grey Wolf, thrice he bowed to him, brushing the ground with his hand.

"Do not bow so low, for we may not be parting for ever," said Grey Wolf. "Who knows but you may have need of me yet."

Tsarevich Ivan and Yelena the Beautiful got on Golden Mane's back, and, taking the Fire-Bird, rode homewards.

Whether they rode a long time or a little time none can say, but by and by they were sorely tired. They got off the horse, and, stretching themselves out on the grass, dropped off to sleep. Just then Tsarevich Ivan's brothers came riding up. They had journeyed far and wide in search of the Fire-Bird and were now returning home with nothing to show for it.

Said they, seeing their brother lying there asleep with Yelena the Beautiful, Golden Mane and the Fire-Bird beside him:

"Look at that! Tsarevich Ivan has put us to shame again. Well, this is the last time he has done so!"

And, baring their swords, they cut off Tsarevich Ivan's head. Yelena the Beautiful woke, and when she saw him lying there dead, the tears poured from her eyes.

Tsarevich Pyotr put the tip of his sword to her breast and said:

"You are in our hands now. We'll take you home, and if you tell our father that it was not we who captured you and the Fire-Bird and the Horse with the Golden Mane we will kill you!"

Yelena the Beautiful was frightened and vowed that she would do as they bade.

They put her on Golden Mane's back, and, taking the Fire-Bird, rode homewards.

There lay Tsarevich Ivan, dead, and the ravens came flying and circling over his head when as if out of nowhere Grey Wolf appeared. He hid behind a bush and waited for the ravens to come down lower. When they did, he crept up and seized one of the fledgelings.

The mother raven began begging him to let the fledgeling go, and Grey Wolf said:

"That I will if you fly beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands, to the Thrice-Ten Tsardom and bring me dead and living water."

Off flew the raven and by and by she came flying back with the dead and living water.

Grey Wolf put Tsarevich Ivan's head to his body and sprinkled the dead water over him, and the head grew back on to the body; he sprinkled him with the living water, and Tsarevich Ivan came back to life.

"Oh, what a long sleep I have had!" said he.

"But for me you would never have wakened," said Grey Wolf. "Your brothers killed you and they took away Yelena the Beautiful, Golden Mane and the Fire-Bird. So let us go after them before Tsarevich Pyotr marries your bride."

Tsarevich Ivan got on Grey Wolf's back and they sped homewards.

They reached the Tsar's own city, and, bowing low to each other, parted, for good this time.

Tsarevich Ivan made his way to the palace. As he walked along he saw that the people were all decked out in their holiday best and asked why this was.

"Tsarevich Pyotr is marrying Yelena the Beautiful today!" came the reply.

Tsarevich Ivan quickened his steps and soon came to the palace. His elder brother saw him and grew numb with fear. But Yelena the Beautiful was overjoyed! She came up to Tsarevich Ivan, and, taking him by the hand, said:

"Here is my true bridegroom!" And she told the Tsar all about everything.

The Tsar was very angry with his elder sons, he drove them out and then and there gave half of his tsardom to Tsarevich Ivan.

Tsarevich Ivan and Yelena the Beautiful were married, and they lived in peace for many a year and never had cause to shed a tear.

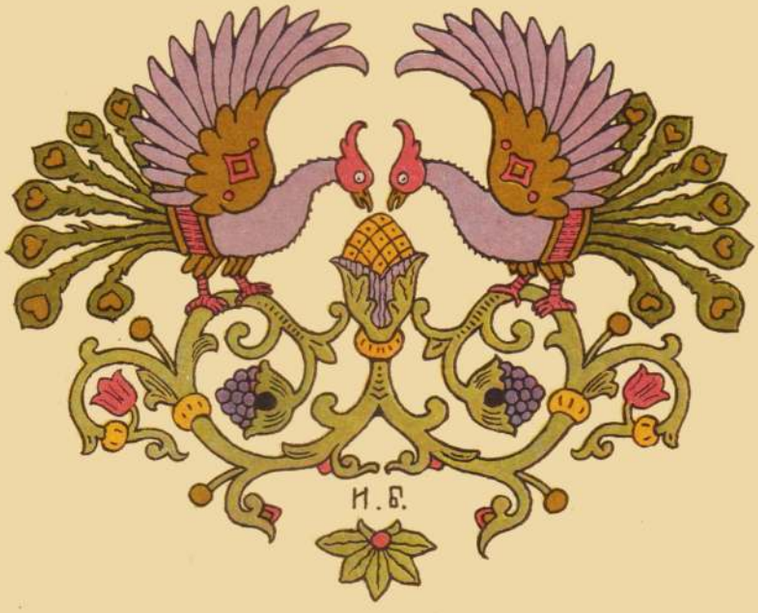
GOZNAK
MOSCOW
1979

СКАЗКА ОБ ИВАНЕ-ЦАРЕВИЧЕ, ЖАР-ПТИЦЕ И СЕРОМ ВОЛКЕ

Русская народная сказка

на английском языке

Printed in the USSR


И.Б.